

DOCTORAL THESIS

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Presentation and Comparative Analysis of Cookbooks during the Long Renaissance in Hungarian Cuisine



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**Presentation and Comparative Analysis of Cookbooks
during the Long Renaissance in Hungarian Cuisine**

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I.

Objectives

The presentation of everyday life, research on lifestyle and history of gastronomy gained new momentum in Europe from the 1960s and 1970s. Attention shifted from general topics of economic history (e.g. agriculture, commerce, industry) towards the everyday life of people. Experts were not only interested in the creation of goods and products and the way people created them, but rather how these goods appeared on the tables of the various classes of society in the past centuries. Describing people's food consumption, the nutritive value of the ingredients and their trade routes became important. Research projects were not only investigating the quantities and qualities of provisions, but also the way they appeared on the tables in the kitchen and the peoples' eating habits, the culture of alimentation. We can observe that some of the works concerning the history of gastronomy try to explore and analyze the dietary habits of the societies, while others focus on presenting the changes which occurred in a shorter period of time or specialize on a distinct topic.

In our country, ethnographers Ferenc Sram and Márta Belényesy made an influential mark in the field of alimentation history. Among historians, László Makkai, István N. Kiss, Géza Perjés and Vera Zimányi dealt with the topic more thoroughly. Archeologist László Zolnay also contributed to the presentation of the field with several studies and books. Towards the end of the 20th century, research on history of gastronomy gained new impetus in Hungary. From this time on, more and more people showed interest in exploring the history of gastronomy. Historians, ethnographers and museologists researching lifestyle and gastronomy carried out several studies on court culture, focusing on regime, dietary habits and folk alimentation. Without the need for completeness, we mention the works of Borbála Benda, Annamária Jeney-Tóth, Erika Kiss and András Koltai, dealing with court culture in the 17th century in details. Géza Pálffy studied the coronation feasts in the 15th-17th centuries. Enikő Rűsz-Fogarasi wrote about hospitality in Kolozsvár. Eszter Kisbán investigated the dietary habits of Hungarian and European peasantry Tamás Hoffmann focused on alimentation of European peasants, Klára Kuti wrote her dissertation on the analysis of the account books of Anna Bornemissza. Balázs Draveczky explored the world of restaurants and coffee-houses in the turn of the 19th century. However, still no one has reviewed or analyzed the existing recipes and cookery books in the recent years.

If we examine the studies on recipes and cookbooks in the field of Hungarian history of lifestyle and gastronomy more thoroughly, we can point out that exploration of these characteristics were emerging from the second half of the 19th century. We can mention Mór Jókai (under the pseudonym Márton Kakas) among the first, whose review on the cookbook manuscript by Mihály Szent Benedeki appeared in the Vasárnapi Újság (Sunday newspaper) on July 6, 1862. Towards the end of the century, historians – along with ethnographers, literati, archeologists and experts on hospitality – were getting more and more concerned about the topic towards the end of the century, describing an old Hungarian dish in 1873, one recipe collection from the 17th century in 1881, and – owing to Béla Radvánszky – two recipe collections from the end of the 16th century. Of course, besides these recipes, we can find some other information on references and reviews about the era and our gastronomic traditions.

Among the publications from the end of the 19th century, we need to emphasize – without the need for completeness – the three-volume book *'Magyar családélet és háztartás a*

XVI. és XVII. Században' (Hungarian family life and household in the 16th and 17th centuries) by Béla Radvánszki, where the author includes very important references related to gastronomy besides his review. Among the publishers and issuers of archivalia, we can make mention of others besides Radvánszky. Among them, for example, was István Fejérpataky, who published the old account books of Hungarian towns and cities (Selmecebánya, Pozsony, Besztercebánya, Nagyszombat, Sopron, Bártfa, Körmöcbánya) in 1885, Zsolt Eőr-Darmay, who reviewed inventories of estates, Albert B. Nyáry, who described etiquette around the table, or Kálmán Thaly, who published a letter about gastronomy originated from 1552 in 1874. Among comprehensive reviews, we can distinguish the work of Dezső Csánki on the court of King Mathias, the presentation of life in the Northern Hungarian cities in the 15th-17th centuries by Kálmán Demkó, as well as the exploration of the history of Hungarian fishing by Ottó Heman. We can also read further books on the topic by Antal Acsay, Oszkár Bárczay and Károly Tagányi.

At the beginning of the 20th century, research on topics of gastronomy became a bit less prolific of compared to the end of the previous decades, however, we must mention the prominent books by József Fógel on the courts of Ulászló I and Louis II, the articles of Zoltán Gombocz on the names of old Hungarian dishes, as well as the correspondence of female aristocrats by Sándor Takács. After the war, research gained strength again, and the book 'The history of Hungarian hospitality from the centuries of the settlement of Hungarians until today' was published in 1943, edited by Károly Ballai. The structure of the book is in agreement with the aforementioned works edited by Massimo Montanari and Jean-Louis Frandrin or the one by Paul Freedman. It contains materials from the most recognized experts of the era, and we can find the only review which focuses exclusively on the analysis of cookbooks and recipe collections: the publication by Károly Gundel, entitled 'The evolution of kitchen and the literature of Hungarian cookbooks until the end of the 19th century' is a truly revolutionary work, which forms the basis of the research concepts of the present dissertation. After Gundel's work, the interest of the historians still neglected the information that could be gained from recipes, and from then on, just a few studies were published, usually describing a given cookbook. Among them, we mention the presentation of Kristóf Simai's cookbook by Ferenc Shram (1964), the introductory study by literary historian Iván Sándor Kovács, entitled 'Gyomros Matéria', in which the author analyzes the cookbooks of the Zrínyi court, and that of Miklós Kis Tóthfalusi with scientific rigor; Elemér Lakó's short summary about Anna Bornemissza's cookbook (1983), a few thoughts by András Szántó about old Hungarian cookbooks (1986), or Klára Kuti's review about sour dishes found in a 16th-century central European cookbook.

We are of the opinion that the gastronomic development of our country, along with the changes that occurred, can only be explored authentically by also considering the court culture and the dietary habits together. (Based on cookbooks, only the diet of the higher classes of society can be reconstructed in detail, but this is not sufficient enough for examining the middle class, and provides inadequate information for the traditions of the peasantry.)

The course of the history of gastronomy was only examined by Eszter Kisbán in the recent decades. According to her, the following larger units can be separated in the past centuries in the history of our cuisine: '*late medieval alimentary culture (1300-1500)*', '*early modern age alimentary culture (1500-1690)*', '*Modern age alimentary culture (1690-1780)*', while the following periods fall into the time intervals 1780-1880 and 1880-1970.

At the beginning of writing the present thesis, several important question arose in us. Why previous research did not aim to examine recipes in more details? Should the analysis of cookbooks be considered by researchers of gastronomy? After completing our research, do the results confirm or reject the statements of the rest of the experts working in related fields

of study? And finally, can we support, reject or supplement the ‘chapters’ of the history of Hungarian gastronomy after the analysis of recipes?

After processing the known sources and the available literature, we decided that we will focus our research on Hungarian cookbooks taken down or published between the 16th and 18th centuries. Certainly, several cookbooks were published during this period in other languages, such as German or Latin, that is worthy of examination, but since the Hungarian sources are not properly processed either, these should have to highest priority. After narrowing down our topic, we felt that it was necessary to analyze a peculiar handwritten cookbook of the era more thoroughly than the others.

Our choice was influenced by a number of factors. During our research we came to the supposition that the ingredients and technologies used in the 16th and 17th centuries remained unchanged until the end of the 18th century, or underwent only some small modifications. To support this claim, we needed a cookbook from the 18th century. However, we do not know about the real owners of the existing sources, making it difficult to supplement the ‘hidden’ information in the recipes with materials from the state archives. As number of possible recipe collections got more specific, we chose the handwritten book of Ágnes Balassa, published in 1769. Concerning this cookbook, two questions arose in us. To what extent was the book influenced by its German original, and could we discover analogies when comparing the description of dishes with other sources of the era? Fortunately, we could answer these questions in our work. Several cookbooks were translated from German to Hungarian in the 18th century. The recipes found in these translated works do not significantly differ from the descriptions whose foreign origin was not explicitly indicated. Therefore, the information gained from the Balassa book authentically reflects the recipes of the era.

II.

Methods

After deciding on the scope of the dissertation, we set apart five larger structural units in the dissertation. In the first one ('Changes in Hungarian Gastronomy'), we introduced the chapters of the history of Hungarian gastronomy based on publications and cookbooks available on the subject. We utilized books and studies concerning general works on gastronomy ('*Eszter Kisbán: Táplálkozáskultúra*'; '*Borbála Benda: Étkezési szokások a 17. századi főúri udvarokban Magyarországon*'), besides parts of works, describing different eras, which were related to the history of alimentation. We emphasize the books '*György Győrffy: István király és műve*', '*László Józsa: A honfoglaló és Árpád-kori magyarság egészsége és betegségei*'; '*László Kósa (editor): Magyar művelődéstörténet*'; '*László Zolnay: Ünnepek és hétköznap a középkori Budán*'. From the reviews and studies, '*Borbála Benda: Fogyasztási szokások és változásai a 17. századi főúri udvarokban.*'; '*Dezső Csánki: I. Mátyás udvara.*'; '*Sándor Csernus: Francia források Zsigmond párizsi tartózkodásáról. (1416 március).*'; '*Eszter Kisbán: Korszakok és fordulópontok a táplálkozási szokások történetében Európában.*'; '*István N. Kiss: Húsfogyasztás (katonai és közfogyasztás) a XVI–XVII. századi Magyarországon.*' We depended on contemporary sources while writing this chapter, which were also used in other sections. Among them, for example, '*Péter Apor: Metamorphosis Transylvaniae.*'; '*Mátyás Bél: Magyarország népeinek élete 1730 táján.*'; '*Miklós Bethlen's biography*'; '*Galeotto Marzio: Mátyás királynak kiváló, bölcs, tréfás mondásairól és tetteiről szóló könyv*' and '*Sarolta Vay: Régi magyar társasélet*'.

In the second chapter, we present Hungarian cookbooks of the Long Renaissance in chronological order. Primarily, we made use of handwritten Hungarian cookbooks of the era, most of them from the Manuscript Archives of the National Széchenyi Library (OSzK Fol. Hung. 1361.; Oct. Hung. 412.; Oct. Hung. 636.; Oct. Hung. 845.; Oct. Hung. 1660.; Oct. Hung. 1747.; Quart. Hung. 1373.; Quart. Hung. 1595.; Quart. Hung. 2906.; Quart. Hung. 3023.; Quart. Hung. 3024.; Quart. Hung. 3316.; Quart. Hung. 3317.; Quart. Hung. 3536.; Quart. Hung. 3687.; Quart. Hung. 4175.; Quart. Hung. 4355.), but one can find a collection of recipes at the Central Archives of the Piarist Fathers, Hungarian Province (KPL Manuscripta. For. 0-3. Nr. 65.), at the library of the Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism (MKVM 1987. 23.; 1978. 9.), and the State Archives of Hungary (MOL Gyárfás cs. P 1874, 4. cs. item 13), respectively.

Besides manuscripts, we also examined printed cookbooks and recipes. Among them, we mention '*Régi magyar ételrecepte*', published by M. K. jr., '*Szakács mesterségnek könyvecskéje*', edited by Erzsébet Király, '*Bornemisza Anna szakácskönyve*', compiled by Elemér Lakó; '*Szakács Tudomány*' and '*Szakácskönyvtöredék*', published by Béla Radvánszky, as well as the cookbooks '*Uj*' (1795) and '*Uri*' (1801), published by Mihály Landerer Füstkúti. We analyzed the structure of the sources, the kitchen technologies applied, and report all the ingredients used in these books, so that we could clearly see the background of the recipes presented in the books. We introduce the ingredients in categories which are widely accepted and used today. For example, among meat (domestic animals), beef-cattle comes first, followed by poultry, non-domesticated animals (small and large game), then enumerating fish and other cold-blooded animals. We proceeded with vegetables (Solanaceae, cabbages, tuberous vegetables, cucumbers, pumpkins, bulb crops, legumes, leaf vegetables,

perennials, mushrooms and flowers) and fruits (native fruits: pomes, drupes, berries, pods, tropical fruits: fresh and dried tropical fruits) in the same manner. Among spices, first we enumerated European then Oriental spices, for other ingredients, we tried to form large categories (such as dairy products, dye). In this group, we indicated ingredients for seasoning and flavoring (for example, coffee, chocolate, preserved fruits), because we are of the opinion that they rather belong to this category. First we presented the aforementioned ingredients with their contemporary names, then applied the name used in our days, for example ‘tengeri szőlő’ (marine grape), then later the common name, ‘ribizli’ (black currant).

In the third section, after briefly introducing the history of the Balassa family (based on the books by Béla Kempelen and Iván Nagy), we explore the family’s cookbook according to the methods applied in the previous chapter.

In the fourth chapter we categorized the recipes found in Ágnes Balassa’s cookbook, then after surveying the recipes we tried to compare them with meals found in other recipe collections. Our categories were primarily based on groups found in other contemporary cookbooks, merged with ideas from present-day books. In connection with the analysis of Ágnes Balassa’s cookbook, we also made use of other gastronomy-related manuscripts found in the family archives (MOL Balassa family. P 11 17. cs. 26. 624–638.; P 1769 22. cs. item 48.; P 1769, 29. cs. 1708.; P 1769, 29. cs. 1725–1726.; P 1770 4. cs. 1757.; P 1770, 11. cs. 1797.; P 1776 13. cs. item 8. 1730-1748.; P 1815, 14. cs. item 22).

The fifth larger unit contains some supplementary material for the dissertation. We present a recipe of a Hungarian cake from the 14th century, including its original version and a translation. We also include the table of contents of the categorized cookbooks, the modern version of Ágnes Balassa’s cookbook and a compiled glossary.

The main goal of the dissertation was to confirm, complement or refute the formerly established periods of the history of gastronomy, as well as to document the sources of cookbooks published during the Long Renaissance era, from which we can become acquainted with the ingredients and technologies used for preparing food in the courts of the nobility. We did not, and could not intend – due to the limitations of the present dissertation – to analyze the Hungarian dietary traditions of the era with the inclusion of other types of sources.

During the examination of recipes and cookbooks we encountered several difficulties. We found out, among other things, that descriptions that were published at the end of the 16th century are really important, but we do not know the authors, the translators, the owners or the date or place of origin. From the cookbooks still in existence from the 17th and 18th centuries, there are only four that complies to the above requirements. Among these, ‘*Magyar étkeknek főzése*’, which was published in 1601 by Mihály Szent Benedeki, who worked in the Thököly court, Anna Bornemisza’s ‘*Egy új főzésről való könyv*’, translated by János Keszei in Radnót in 1680, Ágnes Balassa’s ‘*Külömb-féle nádmézzel*’, translated by István Száblík in Vác in 1769, and Kata Wesselényi’s ‘*Szakáts Könyv*’, translated by János Lázár in Szeben in 1772. Unfortunately, for this reason, we cannot illustrate on a map where the recipes or cookbooks were published or the domicile of their owners.

We frequently encountered different ways of writing and heterogenous orthography in the cookbooks. Sometimes, certain ingredients (for example: tragant, dragant) appear differently. Therefore it did not seem practical to describe the ingredients using their contemporary name, because this way we would mention a raw material twice or three times per work, making it difficult to identify it properly. We also stumbled upon some ingredients whose meaning we could not decipher (‘corciron olaj’, ‘kukurik’), thus we could not analyze the corresponding recipe properly.

III.

Discussion and Conclusions

1. Based on the cookbooks and recipes, it became clear that we cannot confirm the previous categorization of our history of gastronomy (I. 1300-1500, II. 1500-1690, III. 1690-1780, IV. 1780-1880, V. 1880-1970). There were many changes during the periods of '*late medieval alimentary culture (1300-1500)*', '*early modern age alimentary culture (1500-1690)*', '*Modern age alimentary culture (1690-1780)*', but the fundamental principles remained unchanged, therefore we could name this era as '*Long Renaissance in Hungarian Cuisine*'.

2. After processing the books and recipe collections we can state that during the '*Long Renaissance in Hungarian Cuisine*' era, we find continuous development in the works, but the cooks did not change the essential elements.

3. Among the ingredients, we can find beef, calf, lamb, pork, poultry (hen, capon, goose, turkey), game (wild boar, deer, hart, feathered game), fresh-water fish (carp, pike, glanis, trout), marine fish (cod, anchovy), migrant fish (sturgeon, great sturgeon), cray-fish and snails among the meat all along. We can observe the consumption of chitterlings and giblets (marrow, liver, lungs, stomach, maw) in substantial quantities. Amidst vegetables, we frequently come across the popular use of cabbage, carrot, parsley, onion, garlic, legumes, spinach, garden sorrel, cucumber, cabbage lettuce, and the use of asparagus, artichoke and endives that are less common among ordinary people even nowadays. We can say the same about different kinds of flowers (rose, violet, elder) which jams or scented water was made of. According to the cookbooks, we can consider quince, almond and lemon as the most popular ones, but besides them, the use of apple, pear, plum, cherry, sour cherry, grape, currants, raspberry, strawberry, gooseberry, walnut, raisins, orange, limonia was also significant. Among grains, rice, barley, millet, oat, wheat were also regarded popular. The seasoning and flavoring of meals remained fundamentally unchanged during the era of the '*Long Renaissance in Hungarian Cuisine*'. Besides the green spices (European spices), such as juniper berry, parsley, tarragon, sage, mint, dill, thyme, bay leaf, the oriental spices, such as black pepper, crocus, ginger, cinnamon, clove, nutmeg and mace were always present. Owing to the flavorings – salt, honey, cane-sugar, wine (sour, sweet, white, red), vinegar, stock (beef stock, capon stock, pea stock, fish stock), blood, rose water, citrus juice lemon and orange rind, – sweet and sourish taste often dominated in the dishes. For cooking and roasting, they used butter (ordinary butter, home-made undried fresh butter), olive oil, ham, lard, leaf-fat and suet. Among other ingredients, besides water, bread, rolls, flour, starch, egg, dairy products and yeast, they often used tragacanth, bladder of sturgeon and different food colorings.

4. During food preparation, in the field of kitchen technology, roasting (in grease, on open fire and closed heat), frying and toasting, cooking and stewing was widely applied by the majority of the cooks, but for example we do not see any evidence for steaming. They had a preference to thicken the dishes with bread or rolls, but we also encounter roux, spreading of flour (sometimes fried), and mashed soft vegetables. Among the housewives in the 20th century, besides thickening with sour cream and flour, they also used simply sour cream or butter, or sour cream and egg yolk for thickening dishes. At the finishing phases, at the serving and garnishing, we can observe that the use of 'bridges' or gilding the meals were

diminishing in the course of time, but we have a proof even from the 19th century of their application.

5. In connection with the appearance of new types of meals, the description of changes in the 16th and 17th centuries is cumbersome due to the lack of sources. Soups, cooked pasta and grain dumplings were present in books in the 17th century and we can suppose that they were known in the previous century. Ice creams, cordials, spirits seasoned with spices and different flavorings like the *rosa solis* (*rosolio*), the *czelts*, *lebczelts* and *sultzes* originating from Germany, undoubtedly appeared from the 18th century in our cuisine.

6. Of course, the cookbooks cannot give a unified picture about the everyday life in Hungarian kitchens. We find scarce references about the diet of peasants in the examined period, and therefore we can only make hypotheses about this topic. The situation is different for the middle classes – owing to Miklós Tótfalusi Kis. His book, after its initial publication in Kolozsvár in 1695, was published several times in the 18th century in Kolozsvár, Nagyszombat and in Kassa, and with slight modifications even in Pest in 1811; but we should not forget that recommended ingredients and the techniques applied in the cookbook do not reflect the traditions of an ‘ordinary’ middle-class family. During the time of the ‘Long Renaissance in Hungarian Cuisine’, most of all, we can get to know the holiday meals served at upper-class families from the handwritten and printed cookbooks. Following the analysis of the recipes, we can see what kind of different ingredients were used regularly, how meals changed and when novelties appeared.

7. Concerning novelties, the cookbooks can be considered as conservative sources! The – previously unknown – ingredients recommended by the authors were present in different sources long before. The ingredients from the New World already started their conquest in the beginning of the 18th century, yet it seems that cooks and writers of cookbooks only incorporated them into their meals at the end of the century. Except from using turkey, there were only a few recipes with paprika, potatoes and corn, which later fulfilled a dominant role in our cuisine. Compared to them, chocolate and vanilla were regarded as slightly more popular, but even these became more popular at the end of the 18th century. However, pineapple was recommended in cookbooks only from the middle of the 19th century, although it was already known at the courts of the nobility at the end of the 18th century.

8. We do not claim that we can get a precise picture about the cuisine of our ancestors only by considering the recipe collections of the era, without taking into consideration other sources, but in our opinion, we cannot neglect this source of material. After examining the Hungarian cookbooks created between the 16th and 18th centuries, reviewing the used ingredients, analyzing the technologies used to prepare meals, we can state that the recipes are as important as, for example, the family correspondence, menus, inventories or shopping lists are. In the case of the courts of the nobility, we can discover notes about snail consumption in several family letters, menus or incidentally in literary works. This ingredient was not considered a rarity even for simple housewives. But by the cookbooks, we can also obtain an insight into the very meals prepared using snails.

To summarize the conclusions drawn from the analyzed sources, we can establish that from the existing recipes we can make some assumptions about the eating habits of the noble class during the different centuries, but in fact, only a few works would not entitle us to claim specific statements other than making generalizations. For example, we should not propose that almond was the most popular fruit or pike was the most widespread fish between the 16th and the 18th centuries. By examining the frequency of ingredients and spices within the recipe collections, we can only answer questions related to the given cookbooks, but not about the customs of the whole county. Therefore, the legacy of those who were having cookbooks

written or translated can supplement or interpret the recipes of the cookbooks (materials and sources of manors, family correspondence, etc.)

IV.

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